

# THE MACHINES HAVE MADE YOU SOFT



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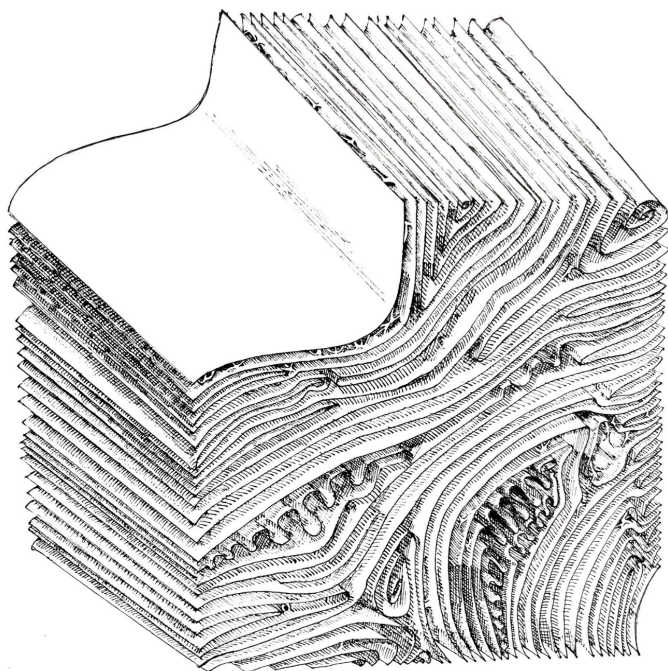
Insta is where we share info about upcoming work parties, skillshares, and other events.

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**Cascadia Urban-Rural Coalition**  
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# foreword

We live in an era of techno-worship. Cotton gin, plane, tractor, computer, car, highway, smartphone, plastic, pharmaceuticals. We're told constantly that these machines, guided by capitalism, make life more convenient, more comfortable, more secure, easier, better. Better? Are you sure? It's true, many (mostly in the Global North, after accepting the destruction of their communities) have gained much security, much comfort, some cool new abilities. But who, for how long? Is it new machines that provided that, or the age-old taking of resources from others? Regardless, we are conditioned from birth by our sorry excuse for a society to be dependent on and even addicted to these technologies...and they come at a price.

Our resource usage here in amerika is out of control. Our conditioning and the material realities we live in conspire to keep us pathetically dependent on phones, industrial ag, globalized trade, drugs, all built on the meta-machine of industrial capitalism. On a system of extraction that is inseparable from destruction of topsoil, of forest, of village, of community, of all peoples. And for what? At this point, it feels like it's gone far past security and useful comfort. It's starting to feel like empty addiction to treats like doomscrolling or THC-heavy weed or opiates masking the pain and ennui of brutal and/or bullshit jobs. Just like constantly listening to music to drown out the dissonant machine noise around us in this automobile hell. Have you forgotten how to talk to your neighbor? Community, slowness, cooperation, all collapsed to the twin gods of consumption and production. And we're brainwashed: by ads, by our institutions, by the news. Forced to produce MORE, conditioned to consume MORE. Through these broadest of mechanisms their Babylon, the industrial-capitalist machine, is killing the youth and the peoples and the earth.

So we have to fight to reorganize not just the means of production, but more generally of the social reproduction. We forget old ways of being and of producing *and enjoying life* at our peril. It goes past Marx. The climate and biodiversity crisis reminds us that a society built exclusively on (post)industrial means of production and organization is *inherently unsustainable*. "Clean energy" will not save us. Industrial, fossil fuel agriculture will not save us. Socialism will not save us (though it sure doesn't hurt). Our ancestors didn't have it perfect but we all know it's still the same things that make us happy. Real human connections, not bullshit scrolling. Growing and eating good food, not food products. Existing in reciprocity with the forest and the salmon, not shortsightedly dominating them. Ours is not the safe path. It is a sacrifice of security and material comfort. But it is the path of joy and pride and connection and honor. On a new land, in a new age, we rediscover our human heritage. Watch the mist rise in the morning. The songbirds stay singing. The old world is here, all around you and within you.

Speaking of which, you know we been doing our thing the last six months. Work parties, commons, the usual. We've continued to provide essential labor at Terrebonne and Clean Greens Farms (shoutout our elders there). We've been



working with (and learning from) Auntie on aiding the salmon people and Snohomish people, out near the Skykomish river. We explored and provided needed labor to local hemp and wool efforts. We provided local blueberry access to community (thru trading our labor) and held mending circles and skillshares in the city. We hung out in the forest and on the street and played in the Lower Bogachiel. Most importantly, we took the bit way the fuck too far at every opportunity. All in service of (re)growing society that walks softer on our home, the land of the Changer. Big love to our community of badass youth, our elders, all the peoples, and the Land. Drop out...join us...

Fuck APEC, fuck Cop City, fuck cars.

Long live the BLMG.

From the River to the Sea!

Palestine will be free!





# 'work harder' is smarter

If the machines make us soft, what is it to be hard?

Soft does not mean physically weak. It does not mean emotionally fragile, mentally overwhelmed, or morally sickened. Do not confuse the bronze stoic of eugenic delight for hardness. To be soft is to live in a construction and think it is reality. To be soft is to foolishly think you can lie in the fluttering lofty palisades of comfort. To be soft is to build walls and to believe you can escape.

THERE IS NO ESCAPE FROM SUFFERING;  
FROM DISCOMFORT;  
FROM REALITY.

To be hard is to remember.

You are human.  
A human animal.  
Don't you ever fucking forget that.  
Born from this earth  
Ashes to ashes  
Dawn to dusk.

To kill is a bludgeoning fist.  
To eat is the seeds in your hand.  
To breathe is a mountain.  
To move is a slow run.  
To survive is a fight against the cold, hot, hungry, sick, fetid fervor of all life.

No joystick in Nevada,  
No shopping cart,  
No CPAP, four stroke,  
Steady-paying job in the urban core  
Can replace it.

Always the labor of love  
And the work of violence displaced. Alas,  
Our lives are convenient if there is nothing in them.  
One day the anchor of machines will untether, your feet will rock unstable, the walls  
of this construction will fall away and you will see again the order of things.

The machine—it is an organism  
Dehumanizing slavery was its first move to innocence:  
Carry on—but without the human  
Now we do not own even our most cruel of actions.

We bleed plastic and work 8 million slaves of oil for every man.  
Our bodies are soft because we ARE plastic.  
Carry on—but without the human  
The machine is everything for us  
It even is us.

Soon we will have nowhere to be hard  
We cannot run if we cannot run from convenience  
We won't even be able to die without it  
It would be... too inconvenient.

We are soft because we run from it!  
Our own death!  
Our own suffering!  
Our own reality!

We forget that our strength is we can  
Work harder not smarter.  
Embrace the effort.  
It is the only thing we truly have



# when does the human cost become too high for the building of a better machine?

all in focus  
and i want to dissolve  
sunlight scattered by clouds  
no precedent for coming undone  
the rat carcass in my attic comes alive  
at night and runs through me  
i am the empty house,  
unseeded garden,  
falling rain.

- EC





# technology for social ecologists

The blackholefish eye of my neighbor's ring camera watches me, Tesla whizzing past at the crosswalk, I come home and scroll my phone to zone out. This life makes me feel like I'm losing my mind, itching for a way out or a future that looks even vaguely livable. Then, I look at the impossible retreat of anarcho-primitivism or the overly engineered technoutopia of solarpunk, and I empathize with the starting point, but cannot fully agree with the conclusions.

CURC has no singular political philosophy, but is a living conversation involving published works of thinkers and new ideas of our community, rooted in where we live. Recently I read Bookchin's *The Ecology of Freedom*, where one question he goes after is: **"How can we absorb technics within an emancipatory society?"**

And it fit so many "CURC thoughts" into place for me. I synthesized 5 takeaways I had around what technology in an emancipatory society looks like, which I want to bring forward to you to think on and contribute to.

## Technology in a liberatory, ecological society is:

### 1. Against all forms of hierarchy & domination

- From the assembly line to the Amazon fulfillment center, ubiquitous and powerful machines such as these would never be possible without the original machine of bureaucracy.
- "A liberatory technology presupposes liberatory institutions": to move away from evil machines, we need to build towards collaborative ways of meeting our needs which don't rely on oppressive managerial regimes.
- Liberal solutions like unionization or DEI initiatives might make shitty jobs more tolerable— and could even win real material gains like raises or better benefits— but we have to ask how far we can get with solutions which fine-tune the balance of hierarchies rather than eliminate them.
- Instead, we need to look towards guilds and worker cooperatives. In our relationships, we can move away from reimbursing each other with money and consider what trades we can make of homemade goods or gifts of skill to build reciprocity rather than rely on currency

### 2. Cultural work, because it is inherently communal

- Capitalism runs on alienation, and humans are abstracted into numbers that contribute to or detract from the profit margin.
- We as CURC fight this alienation by rebuilding the commons: spaces where we can gather together to provide for ourselves in a communal fashion.
- Anyone who's been to mending circle knows it's about a lot more than sewing, because community and culture coexist and reinforce each other. When we invest in communal practices, we create culture, and culture reinforces our participation in communal projects.

- Rather than saying “I do not dream of labor”, we need to dream of what songs we will be singing together as we bring in the harvest, dig for clams, or mend our socks in the next 2, 10, or 20 years, and know that when we have passed on to become ancestors, while the struggle continues, those songs will continue to be sung.

### 3. Adaptive, rather than innovative

- Bookchin says it well: “the dissociations of *working* from *works*— of the *abstract process of laboring* from the *concrete use-values work produces*— is savagely dystopian.” Our machines have innovated themselves into black boxes that have uncontrollable lives.
- We should be adapting technology to real needs that we have within our agreed upon ethical matrix, not innovating into oblivion. So, while much of our tech anguish is (rightfully) focused towards machines that are designed & produced far away from Cascadia, our revolutionary energy needs to be focused on solutions to bioregional problems.
- Localizing technology and fitting it into a social framework requires developing a popular ethical consciousness and highly participatory collective decision-making procedures— not trusting technocrats to deliver us fully automated luxury communism.

### 4. A creative & collaborative act between worker and substance

- Capitalism has made work mundane, and we need to recover the magic. We view production as an action humans enact on inanimate raw materials, taking nature and wrestling it into something useful, rather than participation in the celestial order.
- One way we can do this is through giving respect back to tools. Cleaning our garden shears, sharpening our kitchen knives, or participating in any kind of maintenance work reminds us that we are just one component of a creation process (and that we ourselves need care as well).
- We need to remember that we are organisms, to act as if we are part of a natural process (because we are!), to create and revisit teachings and ceremony which help us to understand our place in the world.

### 5. Ecological

- I’ve left this for last, but part of what makes Bookchin’s outlook on ecology impactful is the idea of wholeness: these 5 principles are nothing without each other and lose their true meaning when separated.
- “To think ecologically is to include nature’s labor in the technical process, not only humanity’s.” When we realize the garden is not the result of our labor, but of the sun, wind, worms, inconceivable numbers of microorganisms in the soil, we “regain a new sense of communication with an entire biotic world that inorganic machines have blocked from our vision”

I can make this even more concrete by elaborating how these principles intersect with CURC philosophy (which is really CURC action): What can we actually do now, in this moment, to develop liberatory technology?

- Participate in the commons: cultivate more third spaces (like mending circles!) where community can be formed & resources and help can be exchanged organically, which become a platform for deep mutual aid.
- Reattach working to works: learning practical resiliency skills (like how to fix your bike) and sharing them within community affirms our autonomy and reminds us that our time should be spent on concrete activities.
- Learn from the Luddites: sabotage – collective bargaining by riot – long live the swing riots – direct action reveals the future
- Consider what bioregional technology can be: what if we came up with a mycoremediation process to restore soil contaminated by the Tacoma Smelt? Can we create an at-home test to check blackberries for toxins so that we could eat more fruit from this non-native plant?
- Participate: if we are to redefine that role of technology in our society, so many group decision-making and planning skills will need to be regained. We can build up these social practices now, by joining a neighborhood mutual aid group, committing to growing conflict navigation skills, or living communally.
- Revel in the spiritual, sensual act of working harder, not smarter: feeling the sweat on your lip, working in a row of comrades to plant a field, these are the things that remind us how good it is to be alive and why we fight for what we do.
- Imagination to power! The future we want is only possible if we can imagine it. Dream, talk to others of their dreams, read speculative fiction, write speculative fiction, write poetry.

I'll leave you with this excerpt from the last chapter of *The Ecology of Freedom*—which sums up not only what we are losing both to capitalism and also to any alternative which fails to imagine the human as more than essentially a worker – but also reminds what we stand to gain from unapologetic utopian dreams:

“What marked the great utopians was not their lack of realism but their sensuousness, their passion for the concrete, their adoration of desire and pleasure... Perhaps even more importantly, **they defied the image that human beings were, in the last analysis, machines**; that their emotions, pleasures, appetites, and ideals could be cast in terms of a culture that viewed the quantitative as authentic truth. Hence, they stood in flat opposition to a machine-oriented mass society. **Their message... rescued the image of humanity as an embodiment of the organic that had its place in the richly tinted world of nature, not in the workshop and the factory.**”





Himalayan blackberry bark and bindweed basket. *Jess C.*

# technician's lament

i know that the machines don't love me back  
a firm hand and the right tool keeping them whole  
with soot on my wrists where the gloves end.  
i could call it intimacy, the way i know them  
inside and out, form and follow and function  
but there is nothing there to reach back and know me.  
when i drive through the city i'm a passing thought  
insulated from the world by a cold steel cage  
i feel like a comet, burning above the ground  
i wake up every morning on a pile of corpses.  
what comfort is gained by surrounding myself with soft dead things  
vanishes in the sunlight like a fever dream  
and i wonder what it would mean to be in reality,  
to feel connected again to everything there is,  
to be eroded by the constant shifting of the water,  
or grow wild like a forest, wild and dangerous,  
and be more than a flicker of life growing fat on plastic  
more than a pest crawling along asphalt veins  
something with teeth to tear out the throat of the empire  
a needle sharpened on the need for the future  
or a brick flying through a street ready to break  
whatever stands in its way. no more being held  
by what twists us into its dark and endless patterns,  
no more bowing gently down before the killing tide,  
no more love for the systems that force us into shape  
and keep the world at bay, and teach us to fawn  
when we know it's time to fight.

my chest is empty  
so where do I go if home is where the heart is  
I naïvely wander into the darkness, aimlessly  
hoping all the lefts and rights take me to where I belong  
do I use my phone to pull up coordinates  
or do I follow the North Star?  
I've lost my sense of direction

either way, this empty chest feeling cannot be filled  
not with lust or love  
not with drunken spirits, seeping poison thru my rushing to nowhere blood  
Why can't my damn phone just tell me where to go?

Fuck it,  
Fuck depending on the external  
I will hike into Rockies to see what's more  
I will hike into dark to find my heart and uncover its core;  
I will sail through the black and murky mental oceans  
and find my true center;  
and, of course, my own sense of direction and pleasure

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# running away in the age of runaway feedback loops

I keep thinking about running away.

I would love to stay in the city – it's where human life comes together in its most beautiful gestalt. At my core, I am an urban social ecologist. I want to live in a large community that resembles a forest or jungle, a diversity of life operating in messy co-existence. More than that, the city is the beating heart of the machine, where the creature comforts created by the machine's global extractions are most readily available. It's easy to meet my material needs here.

Yet, I can't get my mind off collapse. Everything feels like it's unraveling, and what makes this time different from past periods of social upheaval is the changing climate and ongoing mass extinction that will continue to make access to food, water, and cheap energy less reliable. And to be honest, it's difficult to see any good path forward for the urban sphere as collapse intensifies.

Our cities, particularly the post-industrial ones that function largely on flows of finance, real estate, tech, and other non-productive economies, are reliant on massive, external supply chains for their continuation. COVID demonstrated the vulnerability of these supply chains, and frankly it was nowhere as disruptive as many likely climate-related collapse scenarios.

Resilience and redundancy have been utterly stripped from almost every institution over the last 50 years in the name of efficiency (aka profits and privatization), and despite knowing the direction things have been heading for decades, there has been a decided lack of preparedness. The vast majority of urban people, at least in the US, have very little in the way of practical survival knowledge or idea of what to do in a shit-hits-the-fan situation. So when it all goes down – which it already is in various parts of the world – we will not be able to respond in any viable, non-disastrous way.

Thus, I am feeling the need to do something different, to prepare, to become resilient, even if it feels like running away.

There is an argument to be made that collapse is not a foregone conclusion. It is an often slow change, and humans are highly adaptable. One can note that the Pentagon has been actively thinking about/strategizing around climate change for decades and preparing for how to ensure the State's survival as our planet undergoes catastrophic changes. They are one of the actors viewing with optimism the shrinking ice caps, as their demise will open new routes for trade, extraction, and dominance. The State has a vested interest in avoiding collapse and will do everything it can to circumvent it.

However, I doubt the legitimacy of those claims. I think they are rooted in an anthropocentric view of the world that is fundamentally what got us into this mess. They ignore our reliance on the irreducibly complex interconnectedness of all life and Earth systems, and operate from a perspective that humanity is an inevitability. Conversely, I see humanity as a coincidental byproduct of natural history, one that has been around for hundreds of thousands of years, but that has only flourished during a very narrow band of highly favorable climatic conditions known as the Holocene.

We as a species have demonstrated our precocious brilliance, showing that we have the ability to manipulate the world in a way which no other species can. We have taken ourselves from an animal amongst many to Humanity, the species that shapes. We have named ourselves as subjects in a sea of objects. But in that, we have forgotten that everything we change changes us back. That there is no taking without giving.

Certainly, many peoples have understood (and continue to understand) this. They have lived in reciprocity with what surrounds them; returning, tithing, composting. In other words, they have recognized that they have a duty to close loops and complete cycles. But the logic of the West – the dominant, imperial mode of thinking which has overcoded the globe – lacks (or ignores) this knowledge. It thinks that cycles are to be transcended, blind to the catastrophic re-balancing forces that result from this. If it refuses to adapt, it will be forcefully corrected by the natural order. When we distance ourselves from the world that birthed us, we sow the seeds of our own demise.

I don't know the solution. I don't really know what I'm running towards. A part of me is drawn to some sort of "back-to-the-land" idea, but honestly it is not a solution that can be adapted on a mass scale. It's pessimistic, escapist, and isolationist. It is a movement away from technology, many of the comforts of the modern world, from a progressive view of human-destiny. Yet, maybe becoming a small producer living in radical community and right relation to the Earth is all one can really do?

I know that I'm scared. I want to disengage from my reliance on the machinery that makes the urban sphere possible, but that means the painful move away from all this comfort. Even though I know the comfort is built on blood, even though I know it spells my own death (or lack of life). Yet I know this to be true: Discomfort is the fertile soil from which resilience grows.

Ultimately, I believe what there is to do is to learn reverence, destroy the subject-object duality, embrace cycles, and become one with the world of which I am a part. To produce what I can, to build with intention and longevity in mind, to break with the machine which trades us dull pleasures for the blood of the Earth. Maybe it's not running away. Maybe it's simply reengaging the real.

# drogs

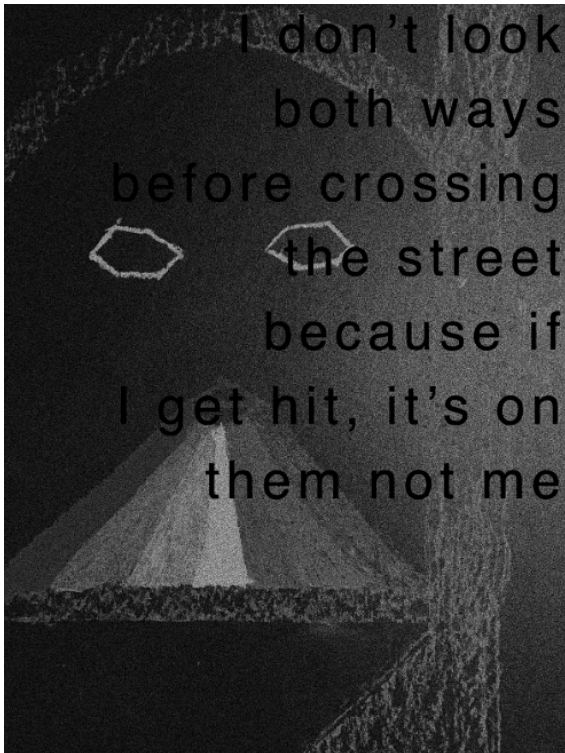
The media has  
Us believing  
Any and all their lies  
But, the revolution  
Will not be televised  
The truth will not be televised  
There's no truth  
In capitalism  
There's no money  
In factualism  
Sugar beets, barley, wheat and corn  
Till the earth  
Like a fucking dust storm  
Has filled the streets  
We inject our insulin  
And they inject  
Our meats  
Sugar beets, crack rock and dairy  
What's happening here  
Is fucking scary  
Walking around the grocery store  
Looking at all that shit  
We can't afford  
Don't worry mom  
I'll put it back  
My stomach hurts  
So I take a nap  
But I can't sleep  
Tumbling and rumbling  
My thoughts race  
Will i make enough money  
To keep my place?  
Secure my spot in society  
As the t.v stations lie to me

I eat candies and coffee  
Filled with crystal sugar  
I'm the middle man  
For a legal crack pusher  
The revolution will not be televised  
Y'all can't get me to believe  
These fucking lies  
They try and tell me  
there's not enough  
Food, water, shelter  
Times are tough  
But I know yalls disposition  
Squeeze the little man into submission  
Keep 8% of the crop in the ground  
Not enough stock  
Holders in this little town  
Pizza parties in lieu of fair wages  
Yall the type  
To put kids in cages  
But hire Rodriguez, Juan, Garcia  
And underpay  
Lupe, Carlos, and Maria  
To till your fields  
Run tractors, pilers, trucks  
15 minute breaks for meals  
Yall really don't give a fuck  
Even in a "worker owned system"  
The lowest paid worker is usually the  
victim  
Legal crack flows thru our veins  
Pesticides, insecticides  
Flows thru the drains



# road kill

Foxes & rabbits, the road I travel is dangerous, my friends  
Deer attached to asphalt are scraped off by sedans  
Squirrels are simply squished  
Beavers' lives lost to arson  
The culprits are wanna-be bumble-bee bandits  
And don't get me started on the murdered mosquitos  
Even bears are getting smoked on these streets  
Hogs hunted by hounds, both bounce off hoods  
A litter of kittens drifts in the draft of a drive  
A single car can take 9 lives  
A Tesla will, without fail, total a turtle  
Another possum will absolutely be poached by a Prius  
Yet, some of these birds like tempting their fate  
And a snake will slither out to wait  
Watch out my friends, I'll be on the road late



From the song "Pedestrian Rights",  
*Zen Gets Yen*

Polyester in plastic  
Flexible elastic

All to wear, but  
What to do when it tears?

Trash it?  
Mend it?

I love this shirt  
So I'm going to mend this shit

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Himalayan blackberry flowers on blackberry-dyed secondhand wool, *Jess C.*

# all that greed; you should kill yourself

Roads across the continent like  
Ropes across a straining heart  
Struggling mightily to beat in the chest  
of a mechanical beast

The poison of avarice is  
Drowning forest village and city  
Blind comfort chokes divinity

Cars and planes are carapaces  
Shielding the soft from reality  
I struggle to be heard on the streets  
Of my own fucking city

There's cobalt clutched in a child's hand  
Madness in the eyes of a sore-pocked junkie  
The truth is as muddy as it always has been

Legs strengthen on broken roads  
Age of machines draws to a close  
Era of great decay and small kindness  
Just might redeem us...who knows?

- AM